

28 October 2002
Docket Management System
Attention: Docket No. FAA-2002-11666
U.S. Department of Transportation
400 Seventh Street, SW (Nassif Building),
Room 401, Plaza Level, Washington, DC
20590-0001.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This responds to public announcement of newly-approved amendments adding Photo ID requirements to FAR 61.3(a) and (l).

SSA believes these new requirements are - for the public and most pilots - a reasonable means to address many aviation security concerns. However, we also assert that FAA guidance and policy materials must provide for instances when, in terms of 61.3(a)(2) and (l), a school-issued photo ID may serve as “(an)other form of identification that the Administrator finds acceptable.”

Issue 1: Many forms of Photo ID are not readily available to young pilots.

Among the five named forms of acceptable photo ID listed in 61.3(a)(2), the driver's license alone ensures that most pilots 16 or older can easily and immediately comply with the new requirements at no cost. The same is not true for a glider or balloon pilot otherwise entitled to fly solo at the age of 14, because -

- driver's licenses are unavailable to 14-year-olds, except in Arkansas and on a restricted basis in North Dakota; in many or most other states, the learners' permits issued to drivers younger than 16 aren't photo IDs.
- the majority of US teenagers have no need to hold passports and do not qualify for Armed Forces IDs issued to dependents
- a state-issued photo ID may be an alternative in many states, but in Washington DC, for example, the minimum age to acquire such an ID card is 15. In Massachusetts, the minimum age is 16 and in New Jersey, the minimum age is 17.

Issue 2: Guidance provided in certain FAA Orders appears inapplicable to the new rules

ID verification practices used in the pilot certification process by FAA Aviation Safety Examiners and Designated Examiners are summarized, respectively, in Order 8700.1Chg 8 (Volume 2, Chapter 1, Section 4, Paragraph 5) and in Order 8710.3c (Chapter 5, Section 1, Paragraph 37 et al) Here, “positive identification” requires documentation including an official photo, signature and residential address information.

Acknowledging age-related issues in ID verification, both Orders then outline the following “Alternative Methods of Compliance” to be used when an applicant does not possess such “suitable identification” -

- “In the case of an applicant under age 21, the applicant’s parent or guardian may have to accompany the applicant and identify themselves (as provided in the Order.) The parent or guardian may then attest to the applicant’s identity. For all other applicants, the identification procedures must be such that the (inspector or examiner) can positively identify the applicant in a manner acceptable to the (inspector or examiner.)”

- in SSA’s view, the parent/guardian option may be workable for ID verification in an office setting during the pilot certification process. We believe this provision is far less practical, however, on the ramp at the airport or anywhere else a person specified in the newly-approved 61.3(l) may request inspection of pilot certificate and Photo ID documents.

SSA Recommendations Address These Issues and are Easily Implemented

To address the needs of young pilots, encourage compliance with the newly approved Photo ID requirements and retain consistency with existing Handbook guidance, SSA recommends that -

- 1. FAA draft a policy memo to clarify that when the pilot in question is under the age of 21, a current school-issued Photo ID is a form of identification the Administrator finds acceptable as a means of compliance with 61.3(a) (2) and (l); and**
- 2. FAA supply this guidance as soon as possible to individual FSDO offices, requesting them to ensure prompt dissemination to FAA Air Safety Inspectors and inclusion in initial and recurrent training programs for Designated Examiners; and**
- 3. FAA circulate notice of this policy guidance as soon as possible to organizations including SSA and others for their dissemination to pilots; and**
- 4. FAA plan to include this policy guidance in the next scheduled revisions of Orders 8700.1 and 8710.3**

Respectfully Submitted,

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The Soaring Society of America